

CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the Meeting of the Council of the City of Westminster held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 18th September, 2024 at Westminster Council House, 97-113 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5PT.

PRESENT

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Robert Rigby

COUNCILLORS

Barbara Arzymanow	Iman Less
Geoff Barraclough	Patrick Lilley
Liza Begum	Alan Mendoza
David Boothroyd	Tim Mitchell
Ruth Bush	Matt Noble
Nafsika Butler-Thalassis	Ellie Ormsby
Melvyn Caplan	Ralu Oteh-Osoka
Maggie Carman	Angela Piddock
Md Shamsed Chowdhury	Ed Pitt Ford
Laila Cunningham	Rachael Robathan
Lorraine Dean	Ian Rowley
Tony Devenish	Cara Sanquest
Paul Dimoldenberg	Caroline Sargent
Robert Eagleton	Karen Scarborough
Paul Fisher	Mark Shearer
Hannah Galley	James Small-Edwards
Jim Glen	Judith Southern
Sara Hassan	Paul Swaddle
Elizabeth Hitchcock	Hamza Taouzzale
Adam Hug	Aziz Toki
Louise Hyams	Jacqui Wilkinson
Ryan Jude	Jason Williams
Aicha Less	

APOLOGIES: Councillors, Concia Albert, Gillian Arrindell, David Harvey, Selina Short and Max Sullivan.

1 APPOINTMENT OF RELIEF CHAIR

- 1.1 Motion moved by the Lord Mayor and seconded by Councillor Paul Swaddle, that Councillor Louise Hyams be elected as Relief Chair.
- 1.2 Motion put, and on a show of hands, declared **CARRIED**.

2 MINUTES

- 2.1 The minutes of the proceedings at the Council meeting held on Wednesday 15 May 2024 were, with the assent of the Members present, signed by the Lord Mayor as a true record of the proceedings.

3 LORD MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Lord Mayor referred to these as set out in the papers.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5 STATEMENT ON URGENT MATTERS

- 5.1 There were no urgent matters.

6 COUNCILLOR PRESENTED PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS, IF ANY

- 6.1 Councillor Sara Hassan presented a petition from a local resident requesting that the Council pedestrianise the portion of Formosa Street between Castellain Road and Warrington Crescent. The petition was referred to the relevant Chief Officer for reporting to the Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality.
- 6.2 Councillor Paul Swaddle presented a petition calling on the Council to hold the Mayor of London to account, to implement pedicab licensing, following the passing of the Pedicabs (London) Act 2024 early this year. The petition was referred to the relevant Chief Officer for reporting to the Cabinet Member for Children and Public Protection.

7 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- 7.1 Members of the public presented a petition and asked five questions which were responded to by the relevant Cabinet Members. The questions and responses are available on the Council's website.

8 QUESTIONS

- 8.1 The questions, supplementary questions and replies are included as a recording on the Council's website.

9 COUNCILLOR ISSUE

9.1 Issues with Illegal Short-Term Lets

Councillor Md Shamsed Chowdhury spoke, and Councillor Matt Noble replied.

10 PARTY BUSINESS

10.1 The Majority Party selected to debate the topic of 'A New Vision for Biodiversity and Greening in Westminster'. The debate would be referred to the relevant Executive Director for consideration when reporting on the subject.

10.2 The Opposition Party selected to debate the topic of 'Ensuring Sustainable and Safe Dockless Bike and Scooter Hire Operations in Westminster'. The debate would be referred to the relevant Executive Director for consideration when reporting on the subject.

11 UPDATED WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE (WAES) INSTRUMENT OF GOVERNANCE REPORT

11.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations adopted.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Full Council agreed to revoke the WAES Instrument and Articles of Government dated 1 April 2010 and the WAES Scheme of Financial Management dated March 2010.
- 2) That Full Council approved the updated Instrument of Governance as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- 3) That Full Council approved the amendment to Chapter 6 of the Constitution (Scheme of Delegation to Officers) set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

12 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

12.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the Audit and Performance Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendation adopted.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council noted the report.

13 POLICY ON DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECKS FOR COUNCILLORS REPORT

- 13.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendation of the General Purposes Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendations adopted.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council adopted the Policy on Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for Councillors and that the implementation of the checks be reviewed in Autumn 2025.

14 BIENNIAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

- 14.1 The Lord Mayor put the recommendations of the Standards Committee report to the vote and on a show of hands declared the recommendation adopted.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council noted the Biennial Standards Committee report as set out in Appendix A of the report.

15 NOTICE OF MOTION

Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

- 15.1 The Opposition Party had selected for debate the notice of motion as set out on the agenda. The notice of motion was moved by Councillor Lorraine Dean and seconded by Councillor Tim Mitchell.
- 15.2 Councillor Paul Swaddle raised a point of order that in the Opposition Party's opinion under section 2.15 of the Council Meeting Procedure rules the amendment moved by Cllr Hug contravened Standing Order 2.13, paragraph 5c insofar as it directly negated the original motion. Having taken advice from the Chief Executive and the Director of Law, the Lord Mayor determined that the amendment retained both the focus and the spirit of the motion in terms of content, even if its actions were amended to require the council to take a different course. It therefore did not constitute a direct negation of the original motion and the request was therefore rejected.
- 15.3 Councillor Adam Hug moved and it was seconded by Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis that the notice of motion be amended, as follows:

Winter Fuel Allowance and pProtecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

Council Notes:

- ~~The Labour Government's recent decision to means-test restrict the Winter Fuel Payments to only pensioners in receipt of means tested benefits like on the basis of Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves, potentially impacting 25,793 pensioners in Westminster.~~
- ~~The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.~~
- ~~The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Westminster during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.~~
- ~~The criticism from Age UK and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.~~
- ~~The That many additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.~~
- ~~That Westminster City Council has already delivered a great many initiatives to support older residents and protect pensioners from fuel poverty.~~
- ~~That of the 4,200 disabled households in Westminster that received direct help from the current Household Support Fund over the summer c. 1,500 were households with older people.~~
- ~~That Westminster City Council have also ensured continued support to Age UK, since January 2023, via the Council's own funds by funding increased Advice Provision and funding Outreach Visits.~~
- ~~That the Council's Winter in the City Offer has successfully supported Westminster residents through the last 2 winters. In the Winter of 2022, approximately 32% for those we supported were aged 60 and older. In Winter 2023, the highest recipients of warm meals and activities were those 60 and older.~~
- ~~That it is estimated that 413 households receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support may be eligible for Pension Credit but are not claiming.~~

Council believes:

- ~~That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.~~
- ~~While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many pensioners across Westminster sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.~~

- ~~The decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.~~
- That many pensioners don't claim the benefits they are entitled to and it is the Council's responsibility to support residents in doing so.
- That the Council should consider the ~~The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.~~

Council resolves to:

- Continue to deliver the Westminster City Council's Cost of Living Fund for Winter activities, including a Winter in the City campaign, enhanced communications on cost of living support and further investment in fuel vouchers.
- Continue to deliver ~~Bring forward~~ a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit to secure ~~which in some respects will help~~ access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Continue to support ~~Encourage~~ local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Westminster are supported in claiming their entitlement.
- ~~Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure~~ that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and writing to all eligible residents members encouraging them to claim the benefits they are entitled to. ~~offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves~~

15.4 Following debate, The Lord Mayor put the amendment to the motion to the vote and following a show of hands declared the amendment to the motion **CARRIED**.

15.5 The Lord Mayor then put the substantive motion to the vote and following a show of hands declared the substantive motion **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

Protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

Council Notes:

- The Government's decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payments on the basis of Pension Credit.
- That many pensioners do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible.
- That Westminster City Council has already delivered a great many initiatives to support older residents and protect pensioners from fuel poverty.
- That of the 4,200 disabled households in Westminster that received direct help from the current Household Support Fund over the summer c. 1,500 were households with older people.
- That Westminster City Council have also ensured continued support to Age UK, since January 2023, via the Council's own funds by funding increased Advice Provision and funding Outreach Visits.
- That the Council's Winter in the City Offer has successfully supported Westminster residents through the last 2 winters. In the Winter of 2022, approximately 32% for those we supported were aged 60 and older. In Winter 2023, the highest recipients of warm meals and activities were those 60 and older.
- That it is estimated that 413 households receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support may be eligible for Pension Credit but are not claiming.

Council believes:

- That many pensioners don't claim the benefits they are entitled to and it is the Council's responsibility to support residents in doing so.
- That the Council should consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit.

Council resolves to:

- Continue to deliver the Westminster City Council's Cost of Living Fund for Winter activities, including a Winter in the City campaign, enhanced communications on cost of living support and further investment in fuel vouchers.
- Continue to deliver a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit to secure access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.

- Continue to support local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Westminster are supported in claiming their entitlement.
- Request that the Council ensures that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Commit the Council to writing to all eligible residents encouraging them to claim the benefits they are entitled to.

The Meeting ended at 9.41pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____